

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GENEVA 02530 171734Z
ACTION SNM-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SS-15 SP-02
L-03 AID-05 IGA-02 INR-10 JUSE-00 CTME-00 TRSE-00
OES-07 OMB-01 /074 W
-----073798 171737Z /41

O 171723Z FEB 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6137
WHITEHOUSE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA NIACT IMMEDIATE
DEA WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 02530

WHITE HOUSE FOR BOURNE
DEA FOR BENSINGER
FROM MFALCO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, CO
SUBJECT: REVIEW OF NARCOTICS COOPERATION WITH ATTORNEY
GENERAL SERRANO

REF: BOGOTA 1501

1. RECEIVED REFTEL AFTER INITIAL LUNCHEON MEETING WITH
AG SERRANO, MINISTER OF JUSTICE GOMEZ, AND COLOMBIAN MEM-
BER OF INCB GARCES. DISCUSSION OF NARCOTICS CONTROL AND
RELATED POLITICAL ISSUES WAS CANDID, CORDIAL, AND HIGHLY
INFORMATIVE, AND WILL BE REPORTED SEPTTEL.

2. UPON RECEIPT OF REFTEL, I RAISED WITH AG SERRANO ISSUE
OF DELAY IN APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL FOR NEW NARCOTICS
UNIT, COVERING POINTS SET FORTH IN REFTEL. SERRANO EX-
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GENEVA 02530 171734Z

PLAINED IN DETAIL THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURES UNDERLYING
THIS APPARENT DELAY, AND ASSURED ME STRONGLY THAT FINAL
APPOINTMENTS WILL BE MADE BY THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH.
SERRANO NOTED THAT THE 49.6 MILLION PESO BUDGET FOR THE
NEW UNIT HAD BEEN PERSONALLY APPROVED BY PRESIDENT LOPEZ
AND THAT REFERENCE TO THIS COMMITMENT HAD BEEN MADE BY THE
MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN HIS PRESENTATION TO THE COMMISSION

ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (CND) THIS WEEK. HOWEVER, SINCE THIS MONEY REPRESENTS CARRY-OVER FUNDS FROM THE COLOMBIAN FISCAL YEAR 1977 (WHICH CORRESPONDS TO THE CALENDAR YEAR), THE COMPTROLLER MUST FIRST CERTIFY THAT THESE FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE, A PROCEDURE WHICH TAKES FIFTEEN DAYS. SERRANO PERSONALLY INITIATED THIS PROCEDURE WITH THE COMPTROLLER BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR GENEVA AND ANTICIPATES THAT IT WILL BE COMPLETED BY THE TIME OF HIS RETURN TO BOGOTA FEBRUARY 25. ONCE THIS CERTIFICATION HAS BEEN MADE, SERRANO EXPLAINED, THE MINISTER OF FINANCE MUST APPROVE THE APPROPRIATION. HOWEVER, SERRANO HAS ALSO SECURED HIS ASSURANCE OF PROMPT APPROVAL, WHICH, IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S STRONG, PUBLIC COMMITMENT, SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING.

3. AS REPORTED EARLIER, SERRANO DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT DELIVERY OF THE ATF WEAPONS MUST AWAIT THE APPOINTMENT OF THE ENTIRE COMPLEMENT OF THE NEW UNIT, AND HAS DESIGNATED DEPUTY A.G. GARCIA TO RECEIVE THEM.

4. SERRANO APPARENTLY DOES NOT SHARE GARCIA'S VIEW THAT THE NEW UNIT WILL REQUIRE THREE MONTHS TO BECOME FULLY OPERATIVE. SERRANO STATED CLEARLY TO ME THAT HE HAS ALREADY DECIDED WHICH OF THE CANDIDATES TO SELECT FOR THE NEW UNIT, BUT THAT UNTIL THE BUDGET HAS BEEN FORMALLY CERTIFIED AND APPROVED, HE IS NOT LEGALLY EMPOWERED TO MAKE THE ACTUAL APPOINTMENTS. HE INTENDS TO ANNOUNCE THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GENEVA 02530 171734Z

APPOINTMENTS AS SOON AS THESE PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, WHICH HE BELIEVES WILL BE THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH.

5. SERRANO DOES NOT VIEW THIS THREE WEEK DELAY AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO EXECUTING THE FEBRUARY 27 TRAINING COURSE ON SCHEDULE. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAS ALREADY ON HIS STAFF MORE THAN TWENTY (20) OF THE TOTAL 96 MEMBERS OF THE NEW UNIT, AND IT IS THIS GROUP WHICH WILL COMPOSE THE FIRST CLASS OF TRAINEES. THE SECOND TRAINING SCHOOL IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN LATE MARCH, BY WHICH TIME SERRANO IS CERTAIN THAT THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE NEW UNIT WILL HAVE BEEN APPOINTED OFFICIALLY.

6. COMMENT. SERRANO WAS FORTHRIGHT IN HIS EXPLANATION AND SINCERE IN HIS BELIEF THAT HE HAS PERSONALLY ASSURED THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE BUDGETARY APPROVAL PROCEDURES DESCRIBED ABOVE. I STRESSED TO HIM THE CONCERN OF OUR EMBASSY THAT THESE MATTERS NOT BE ALLOWED TO IMPEDE IN ANY WAY THE PROMPT, EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION OF THE NEW NARCOTICS UNIT. IF THERE ARE ADDITIONAL ISSUES WHICH NEED CLARIFICATION, I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR IMMEDIATE VIEWS. SERRANO WILL BE RETURNING TO CND MEETINGS ON FEBRU-

ARY 20, AT WHICH TIME I CAN EASILY RAISE FURTHER CONCERNS.
MINISTER OF JUSTICE GOMEZ WILL ALSO BE ATTENDING CND FROM
FEBRUARY 20 THROUGH FEBRUARY 22. IN LIGHT OF THESE DIS-
CUSSIONS, I RECOMMEND THAT WEAPONS REFERRED TO IN PARA 3
REFTEL BE DELIVERED AS PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED, SO THAT GOC
WILL BE ASSURED OF CONTINUING US COOPERATION IN JOINT NAR-
COTICS CONTROL EFFORT. VANDEN HEUVEL

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